



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City



EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

First Regular Session

House Bill No. 4487

Introduced by Representative SOLOMON R. CHUNGALAO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Ifugao Rice Terraces have been dubbed as the "Eighth Wonder of the World" and inscribed in the World Heritage List in 1995 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)¹. Long before its inscription in the World Heritage List, the rice terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras, specifically the Ifugao Rice Terraces, were given due recognition in 1973 by the Philippine Government as a national landmark for its high world cultural value and as an irreplaceable treasure of the country².

Built 2000 years ago, the Ifugao Rice Terraces have been regarded as a "landscape of great beauty that expresses the harmony between humankind and the environment" which resulted from the fruit of knowledge handed down from one generation to the next and the expression of sacred traditions and a delicate social balance.

The Ifugao Rice Terraces Commission (IRTC) was created in 1994 by virtue of Executive Order No. 158 to act as an advisory body to the President on matters affecting the Ifugao Rice Terraces³. This was replaced in 1999 with Banaue Rice Terraces Task Force (BRTTF) through Executive Order No. 77 which was mandated to restore, preserve and develop the

¹ UNESCO. (1995). New Inscribed Properties. Retrieved at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/newproperties/date=1995&mode=list>

² DENR. (2008). Conservation and Adaptive Management of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS): The Ifugao Rice Terraces Philippine Project Framework. Retrieved at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bp814e>

³ Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines. (1994). Executive Order No. 158, s. 1994. Retrieved at <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1994/02/18/executive-order-no-158-s-1994/>

Ifugao Rice Terraces as well as to prepare a development plan for the same⁴. In 2002, BRTTF's responsibilities, functions and assets were transferred to the Provincial Government of Ifugao. This resulted in the creation of the Ifugao Rice Terraces Cultural and Heritage Office (IRTCHO) under the Office of the Provincial Governor, which was later replaced by the Ifugao Cultural Heritage Office (ICHO).

During the late 1990's, the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) sent a crop specialist to Banaue who discovered that the worms were damaging the roots produced by germinated rice seeds aside from eroding the terraces by burrowing in their walls. The rats, meanwhile, were eating the rice flower heads and contributing to the terraces' erosion with their burrowing and if left unchecked, the rats could destroy about 75 percent of rice crops. According to the same PhilRice report, severe drought and massive deforestation of the highlands have also contributed to the terraces' collapse⁵.

In 1999, the rice terraces were included in the list of 100 most endangered sites of the World Monument Watch. In 2001, the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO decided to inscribe the Ifugao Rice Terraces on the List of World Heritage in Danger, asserting that "in the absence of a systematic monitoring programme or a comprehensive management plan, it is, at present, impossible to guarantee the preservation and sustainable development of these rice terraces.

During the 2001 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, a UNESCO report revealed that many farmers have left, abandoning 25-30 percent of the terraces, and letting their indigenous irrigation system fall into ruin. This abandonment, together with rat and worm pests, threatened to destroy the terraces. The same UNESCO report maintained that despite good planning, irregular development is taking place, threatening to erode the heritage landscape. It further claimed that international assistance has not been mobilized to help the area so far. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature advised that if ongoing destruction of the terraces is not arrested, widespread damage may be irreversible⁶.

There is an urgent need to look into the progress of various efforts and initiatives to save the Ifugao Rice Terraces from total degradation. Therefore, there is a necessity to address growing concerns over the many

⁴ Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines. (1999). Executive Order No. 77, s. 1999. Retrieved at <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1999/03/04/executive-order-no-77-s-1999/>

⁵ Senate Office of the Secretary. (2011). PSR No. 440. Retrieved at <https://www.senate.gov.ph/lisdata/1113594821.pdf>

⁶ UNESCO. (2001). Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. Helsinki, Finland. Retrieved at <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/repcom01.htm#riceterraces>

issues surrounding the rapid deterioration of the rice terraces, in order to determine whether remedial measures must be introduced to ensure that the Ifugao Rice Terraces are sustainably protected.

Hence, this bill is proposed to address all these challenges.



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AN ACT CREATING AND ESTABLISHING AN IFUGAO RICE TERRACES COMMISSION FOR THE RESTORATION, PRESERVATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE IFUGAO RICE TERRACES, THE ONLY LIVING SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE INSCRIBED IN THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST IN 1995 BY THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO) AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREOF

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. *Creation and Establishment.* – There shall be created and established a Commission to be called the “Ifugao Rice Terraces Commission”.

SECTION 2. *General Mandate.* – The Commission created and established is mainly for the restoration, preservation and maintenance of the Ifugao Rice Terraces in the municipalities of Banaue, Asipulo, Hungduan, Mayoyao, and Kiangan in the Province of Ifugao.

SECTION 3. *Composition of the Commission.* – The Commission shall be composed of the following, to wit:

Secretary of Tourism (DOT)	Chairman
Secretary of Agriculture (DA)	Vice Chairman
Secretary of DENR	Member
Secretary of DPWH	Member
Secretary of DILG	Member
Provincial Governor of Ifugao	Member
Congressman of Ifugao	Member

A representative each from the business, agricultural, and religious sector and non-government organizations (NGO) shall serve as consultants to the Commission.

The Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) shall serve as the technical secretariat of the Commission headed by the Chief Operating Officer of the Department of Tourism (DOT).

SECTION 4. *Functions and Responsibilities.* – The Commission shall have the following functions and responsibilities:

- a) Immediately formulate a ten (10) year Ifugao Rice Terraces Master Plan within one (1) year upon its creation and establishment with the following guidelines:
 1. Restoration, preservation, and maintenance of the area's terraces, protection of its ecological balance and enhancement of its environment;
 2. Maximum enjoyment and easy access of ordinary people to public areas;
 3. Rational land-use and zoning plan considering that the Ifugao Rice Terraces are national treasure and tourist destinations of Filipinos from all parts as well as foreign visitors;
 4. Prohibition/control of usually tall, unstable, and obstructive structures obscuring public view of the natural beauty of the surroundings in accordance with the zoning ordinances of the local government units concerned and subject to the pertinent laws, rules and regulations on the matter;
 5. Provision for massive reforestation facilities.
- b) Formulate, coordinate and execute policies on the implementation of all programs, projects and activities of the government affecting or relating to the Ifugao rice terraces;
- c) Initiate, plan, undertake and supervise the restoration, maintenance and development of the rice terraces walls, irrigations, dikes, paddies, watersheds, access roads and view decks;

- d) Provide livelihood opportunities as an alternate employment for the constituents of these municipalities;
- e) Sponsor and conduct cultural activities in the area;
- f) To contract, lease, sell, dispose, acquire and own properties;
- g) Receive, take and hold by bequest, device, donation, gift from foreign and domestic sources, either absolutely or in trust for any of its purpose any assets, grant or property, invest and reinvest the same and deal with and expand its assets and income in such manner as will best promote its objectives;
- h) Enter into contracts with any private person or entity or any government agency, either domestic or foreign, whenever necessary for the effective discharge of its functions and responsibilities under such terms and conditions as it may deem proper and reasonable;
- i) Provide grants for the conduct of historical, architectural or scientific researches pertaining to the rice terraces and for other purposes in furtherance of its objectives;
- j) Exercise all powers as maybe necessary, essential or incidental to the attainment of its objectives.

SECTION 5. The Commission shall be provided an office space in the DOT buildings and/or premises with office secretariat personnel to be provided by DOT and headed by the DOT Secretary or his/her representative.

A provincial office shall be established in the provincial capitol to be provided by the Provincial Government of Ifugao.

SECTION 6. The Commission may call upon any government agency, office or bureau for assistance in the discharge of, and form committees to facilitate the performance of, its functions and responsibilities.

SECTION 7. Appropriations. – The appropriation and amount of finance necessary to carry out the creation and establishment of the Commission and for it to effectively implement its mandate, the same shall be provided from the budget allocation of the Department of Tourism (DOT); Department of Agriculture (DA); and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), to wit:

- a) For the maintenance and operations of the Commission, the same shall be provided from the budget of DOT to be sourced out from the travel tax and/or MOOE the case maybe;

- b) For the maintenance, preservation and restoration of the needed irrigation systems for the terraces, as well as the restoration, maintenance and preservation of the rice terraces paddies, the same shall be taken from the budget allocations of the DA which shall not be less than 50,000,000.00 PhP annually;
- c) For the maintenance, preservation and reforestation of the sources of water for the rice terraces, the same shall be taken from the budget of DENR which shall not be less than 50,000,000.00 PhP annually.

SECTION 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Commission shall promulgate rules and regulations as may be necessary for the effective implementation of the Act.

SECTION 9. *Separability Clause.* – If, for any reason, any part or provisions of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining parts or provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 29. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, Decrees, orders, rules and regulations inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 30. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in any newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,